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Subject: [WQ News] Diesel Compounds Found in Water Near Wyoming Fracking Site
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News From Bloomberg

Wyalusing Rocks Overlook is seen on March 20, 2012 just outside Wyalusing, Pennsylvania. Chesapeake Energy owns the drilling rights of this farmland within the Marcellus Shale region that has attracted many oil companies. Photographer: Melanie Stetson Freeman/The Christian Science Monitor via Getty Images

Bloomberg News

Diesel Compounds Found in Water Near Wyoming Fracking Site

By Mark Drajem on September 26, 2012

A U.S. Geological Survey report on its water testing in Pavillion, Wyoming -- where residents complain that gas drilling and hydraulic fracturing contaminated their drinking supplies -- found levels of methane, diesel-range compounds and other hydrocarbons.

The geological agency retested water in one well after state officials and Encana Corp. (ECA), the driller, complained about a report by the Environmental Protection Agency last year linking contamination to fracking. The report today is "generally consistent" with what the EPA found, Alisha Johnson, an agency spokeswoman, said in an e-mail. Encana said the EPA's testing wells are flawed.

The EPA's draft report in December was the first U.S. government finding to link hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, and water contamination. The USGS said it didn't interpret the results, which were given to state officials.

"We are now waiting as analysis of this data is done," Wyoming Governor Matt Mead said in a statement. "It should help inform" the outside review of the EPA study, he said.

Encana, based in Calgary, owns 140 natural-gas wells in an area of cattle and hay farms outside of Pavillion, about 230 miles (370 kilometers) northeast of Salt Lake City. The company has argued that contaminants found in homeowner water wells are naturally occurring, and the two test wells that the EPA drilled in 2010 were improperly constructed.

Well Flaws

The geological agency only tested water from one of the two EPA wells, a decision that bolsters the company's claims about deficiencies with the monitoring wells, Doug Hock, an Encana spokesman, said

in an e-mail.

"From a preliminary examination of the data, there appears to be nothing surprising in these results," Hock said.

Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, uses millions of gallons of chemically treated water and sand to free oil and natural gas trapped in rock. The technology helped the U.S. cut dependence on imported fuels, lower power bills and cut state unemployment from Pennsylvania to North Dakota.

The wells in Pavillion are different than those in most areas of Pennsylvania, where residents also have complained about tainted water from fracking. These Wyoming gas wells don't go as deep and the aquifer is closer to the gas-production zone.

"It is important to note that the draft findings are specific to Pavillion, where the fracturing is taking place in and below the drinking water aquifer and in close proximity to drinking water wells," Johnson said.

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